

6th Balkan Botanical Congress, Rijeka (CRO), September 14-18, 2015

Excursion to Island of Krk, September 16



Island of Krk is situated in Quarnero Bay in Northern Adriatic and is Croatian largest (cca 400 km²) and northernmost island. Its altitude gradually increases from rather low northern part to a highest 569 m a.s.l. in the southern part. It is built of dominant limestone rocks with some flysch zones. The most widespread soil types are brown soils, terra rossa and rocky grounds. Current form of the island was created after the transgression of the sea, in the period following the last glaciation, while present landscape is formed mostly through long-term human traditional activities (extensive sheep live stocking, timber exploitation, building of stonewalls (so-called *suhozidi*, *gromače*) and maintaining ponds. However, south-eastern slopes of the island are mainly influenced by a strong local wind called *bura*, blowing from the direction of the Velebit Mt forming a bare moonlike relief. As a result of rapid touristic development and abandonment of traditional live stocking, in last few decades large areas of the island have been regrown by shrubs and low forest. Phytogeographically, the island represents a meeting point of deciduous sub-Mediterranean and evergreen eu-Mediterranean vegetation. The later is developed solely on few westernmost spots of the island. More than 1100 vascular taxa have been recorded on the island so far, classifying this island as Croatian Important Plant Area (IPA).

1. Soline Bay



The Soline Bay is situated on the northeastern part of the island and represents the only area with salt marshes on the island. This mudflat is one of the largest and best preserved in Quarnero Bay. A gradient of different halophytic vegetation types is clearly evident on this site: starting with sea meadows of *Cymodocea nodosa*, continued with salt muds colonised by therophytic annuals *Salicornia procumbens* ssp. *procumbens* (until recently thought to be *S. europaea*) and *Suaeda maritima*, tide flooding meadows with *Puccinellia festuciiiformis* and *Halimione portulacoides*, meadows of *Artemisia coerulescens* and *Limonium narbonense*, and finally, a belt dominated by rushes (*Juncus maritimus* and *J. acutus*). This is a very dynamic ecosystem, depending on the accumulation of sediments caused by torrents of the nearby stream, and sediment relocation by tides and waves. Soline Bay is important as a migration and

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wintering spot for many endangered bird species. Unfortunately, in recent years this area has been degraded due to construction works and tourism practices, which are not in line with habitat conservation. Therefore, a whole bay was recently protected as NATURA 2000 site.

2. Islet of Košljun



The islet of Košljun is situated on the western part of the island, within the large Bay of Punat. It is one of the last spots of the evergreen forest vegetation dominated by holm oak (*Quercus ilex*) in Croatia, therefore protected as Special Forest Reserve. Due to human influence and degradation of natural vegetation, holm oak forests are generally very rare along eastern Adriatic coast and islands. Although 65 % of Košljun is covered by forest vegetation, more than 350 plant taxa were registered.

3. Area of Zarok near Baška



Baška is a settlement situated on the southern part of Krk, at the end of the large Baška basin. Through the same basin flows a stream Suha Rečina, which is one of the few constant streams on Adriatic islands in general. On the eastern edge of the settlement there is a geologically and botanically very interesting sandy area named Zarok. On the thick sediments of Quaternary sands, rich endemic flora has developed (e.g. stenoendemic *Asperula borbasiana*, *A. woloszczakii*, endemic *Allium horvati*, *Centaurea spinosociliata* etc.). On the large gravel beach vegetation of drift lines used to occur, but today only remnants of this vegetation type can be found.

Optional visit: early Romanic church of St. Lucia in Jurandvor near Baška, with one of the oldest inscriptions in old Croatian Glagolitic alphabet (Baščanska ploča), found exactly on the same date as today (16th September) 164 years ago. Entrance fee: 25 kn (approx. 3 Euros).

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Krk

-  Soline (Meline)
-  Košijun
-  Baška (Zarok)

